



U.S. Embassy Santiago Newsletter

Information for American Citizens in Chile

Volume 4 Issue 2

April-June 2008



THE FALL EDITION

Embassy Hosts Wardens Meeting

In March, the Embassy hosted its annual Wardens Meeting. The meeting gives us a great opportunity to thank our wardens for their service to the Embassy, preview upcoming changes to the ACS Unit, and provide additional crisis training to our wardens.

The meeting was hosted by our DCM Carol Urban, with brief presentations by Ambassador Paul Simons, and Consul General Chris Bendsen, with a special thanks to RSO Paul Backstrom for his briefing on emergency preparedness.

We appreciate all of the wardens who came to the meeting and look forward to meeting wardens who were unable to come.

We are always looking for more wardens. If you would like to volunteer, please send us an e-mail at SantiagoAmcit@state.gov.



Ambassador Simons opens Wardens Meeting

Non-Immigrant Visa Questions?

We've seen an increase in Americans coming to the Embassy to discuss visa-related questions in connection with Chilean friends, family, or acquaintances. As the ACS Unit is not equipped to answer these questions, please review the visa information on the Embassy website or direct your visa inquiries to SantiagoVisa@state.gov.

Reminder: Reports of Birth Abroad

Our new appointment system for Consular Reports of Birth Abroad (CRBAs) has been a success! As a reminder, we are accepting applications for Consular Reports of Birth Abroad (CRBAs) through appointment only. Please contact SantiagoAmcit@state.gov for an appointment.



Chilean Fall Colors

Immigrant Visas: The Adam Walsh Act

On July 27, 2007, President George W. Bush signed the Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act of 2006.

Because of this Act, consular officers abroad were instructed to cease accepting certain immigrant visa petitions because they lacked the means to perform the mandatory criminal background checks on American citizen petitioners, as required by the Adam Walsh Act.

However, the Department of State and the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service have worked to develop a mechanism whereby USCIS will perform these required Adam Walsh Act checks for any petitions accepted abroad by consular officers.

Consular posts abroad can now accept petitions for immediate relatives (spouses, children and stepchildren under the age of 21, and parents) of American citizens who are residents in their consular districts, including members of the armed forces. Posts can also accept true emergency cases, such as life and death or immediate health or safety concerns, and others determined to be in the national interest. We may accept I-130 petitions (immigrant visa petitions) from U.S. citizens who reside in Chile and have done so for the previous six months.

All lawful permanent residents and American citizens resident in the United States must file their I-130 petitions at the USCIS Service Center having jurisdiction over their place of residence.

For additional information, including the location of USCIS Service Centers, you may visit www.uscis.gov or contact Santiago's Immigrant Visa Unit at santiagoimmigration@state.gov



An Autumn Evening outside of San Pedro de Atacama

Adoption News

On April 1, 2008, the The Hague Convention on the Protection of Children and Co-Operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption entered into force. The Hague Adoption Convention seeks to ensure that intercountry adoptions are made in the best interests of the child and with respect for his or her fundamental rights, and to prevent the abduction, the sale of, or traffic in children.

The Convention also establishes principles and procedures to take the interests of birth parents and adoptive parents into account. The Convention does not benefit any one country, and there are no hidden agendas. The sole purpose is to determine what is best for the child.

For more information about adoption in Chile, please visit www.travel.state.gov. Before initiating any adoption proceedings in Chile, U.S. citizens must contact SENAME (Servicio Nacional de Menores) and should also obtain information from DHS/USCIS about filing a petition to adopt a child (www.uscis.gov).

American Citizen Service Unit – Hours and Contact Information

Walk-In Hours: M-F 8:30 – 11:30 am (except the first Friday of every month)

Appointments: W 2:00

Address: Av. Andrés Bello 2800, Las Condes, Santiago

Phone: (56) (2) 330-3000

E-mail: SantiagoAmcit@state.gov

Our website, www.usembassy.cl, provides detailed information and instructions for obtaining services and forms. The State Department website, www.travel.state.gov, has even more to offer about travel to other countries and numerous other items of interest to Americans living or traveling abroad.



Autumn on Rapa Nui

ACS Holidays for Fall 2008

Below is our list of holidays and in-service days for the 2nd Quarter of 2008. The Embassy closes for the U.S. and Chilean holidays listed below. On in-service days, we are available only for emergencies. The in-service days provide our staff an invaluable opportunity for training to keep current on the rules and regulations that enable us to provide quality service to our customers. Thank you for your understanding!

April 4 – In-Service (Emergencies Only)

May 1 – Labor Day (Chilean Holiday)

May 2 – In-Service (Emergencies Only)

May 21 – Battle of Iquique (Chilean Holiday)

May 26 – Memorial Day (U.S. Holiday)

June 6 – In-Service (Emergencies Only)

Overseas Voting News

As it's an election year, we will continue running this primer on how to vote overseas through November. Please contact us at VoteSantiago@state.gov with any additional questions on how to register, request a ballot, or vote.

Do you want to vote in the 2008 Presidential election? Your best source for step-by-step instructions on how to register is the Federal Voting Assistance Program website, www.fvap.gov. The basic steps are below, but each state has slightly different rules, so please visit the website to ensure that you properly complete the registration form. If you register and request a ballot in a timely manner but do not receive a ballot in time to vote, you may complete a federal write-in absentee ballot to vote in Federal Elections only. The Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot is also available on www.fvap.gov.

THE BASIC ABSENTEE VOTING PROCESS

Step 1

Citizen completes and mails the Federal Post Card Application Form (SF-76), [Registration and Absentee Ballot Request Form](#).

Step 2

Local Election Official approves Registration request or requests further information

Step 3

Local Election Official mails absentee ballot

Step 4

Citizen votes and mails the absentee ballot to the Local Election Official in time to meet state deadlines.

In order to receive an absentee ballot in a timely manner, it is imperative for citizens to keep their local election official informed of address changes.



Late Autumn in Valdivia

COMMUNITY RESOURCES

The American Association of Chile: a non-profit, non-political organization serving and uniting the citizens of the United States and their families, and striving to build strong bridges between members and the Chilean community (description from AAC's website, www.aachile.org).

The American Chamber of Commerce Chile (AMCHAM Chile): Promotes free trade and investment between Chile and the United States and serves as an effective voice for the membership while facilitating related services (description from AMCHAM's website, www.amchamchile.cl).

The Association of Americans Resident Overseas (AARO): Describes itself as a non-partisan, public-service organization dedicated to serving the interests of Americans abroad and has asked us to provide its contact details to the American community in Chile. The AARO's email address is aaro@aaro.org and its website is www.aaro.org.

Little League Chile: Do you know a child who would like to play baseball? Would you like to get involved with youth baseball? Contact Mr. Jorge Varela at 09-437 2050 or email: jlvarrela@vtr.net.

International Professional Women's Association (IPWA): a not-for-profit organization of English-speaking women interested in professional, personal and cultural development. Activities include monthly meetings, dinner and cocktail parties. More information is available at: www.ipwasantiago.org

English Language Religious Services in Santiago: Details are available on the Embassy website www.usembassy.cl under the Frequently Asked Questions tab under American Citizens. (Schedules are subject to change. Please call to confirm.)



Autumn in Santiago